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It's Germans, Not Cubans

Now that Washington has tied itself to the tail of President Giscard d'Estaing's interventionist policy in Africa—against British advice—it will be disappointed to learn that African opinion generally does not favor trying to fight Russian intervention with Western intervention. The plan hatched between Carter and Giscard in Washington early in June proposed that the NATO powers should intervene only when invited to do so by the Africans themselves. They then publicly pledged logistical support to a non-existent Pan-African Regional Military Force. Almost immediately such a force miraculously appeared. Actually it is just a Moroccan group to which a few units have been added from the Ivory Coast and Gabon, two of black Africa's most conservative states, with a late entry of Egyptian artillery.

Inevitably the creation of this force to rally to the assistance of President Mobutu's miserably demoralized army in Zaire bore the label of "made by NATO" even before it got off the ground and into US Army C-141s. Serious nonaligned African leaders, like Tanzania's President Nyerere, resent this label. It is the height of arrogance for anyone else to talk about establishing a Pan-African force to defend Africa, he has said. And he is obviously right. If Africans had themselves first set up such a force (as they did after the first invasion of Shaba in 1977), and then appealed for foreign assistance, the whole enterprise would have been seen in a different light.

Fortunately, the Carter administration has built up enough goodwill in Africa—thanks largely to Andy Young—to extricate itself from this deplorable error. But there is another, worrying aspect about this latest lurch in the policy of the Carter administration: its obsession with Cubans. The Cuban leadership has repeatedly said that it played no part in the latest invasion of Zaire's Shaba province by the Front for the National Liberation Committee (FNLC). I believe them. There is not the slightest evidence to link the Cubans to the FNLC's latest enterprise, despite White House claims to the contrary. House Speaker Tip O'Neill said on June 5 that he had been told by Admiral Stansfield Turner that the CIA has photographs of Cuban military leaders with rebel troops in Zaire. Why were these alleged photographs not shown to the congressman? Turner himself told reporters: "We are not saying they [the Cubans] did not go in. We are not taking the position that they did. The evidence is not hard in one direction or the other." But if these photos exist, they should be conclusive. And if they do exist, why aren't they published? Turner says only, "We have sufficient evidence to draw the conclusion that there must have been Cuban involvement in the training and equipping of these insurgent forces."

The rebels have only one training camp in Angola, at a place called Chicapa, which is rather like a big farm with some 35,000 people, including women and children. They are mainly Lunda, the same people as those living across the border in Shaba. Being anti-Mobutu they helped the MPLA forces in the civil war in Angola in 1976, fighting the Zaire-supported FNLA. *At that time* they were certainly trained and equipped by Cubans.

More recently, however, the FNLC has indulged in large-scale diamond smuggling as a means of raising funds for its struggle. This activity was strongly frowned upon by the Angolan authorities, who also were concerned about the FNLC's recruiting of new supporters from among the Lunda across the border. President Neto of Angola apparently decided that the situation along that part of his border had to be brought under control and the diamond-smuggling stopped. He entrusted the Cubans with the role of policing the area and maintaining security. The Cubans (according to Western diplomatic sources in Angola) have expressed strong political and military criticisms of the FNLC and are unlikely to have assisted them in crossing the border into Shaba province. My information is that the Soviet bloc actually entrusted the training and equipment of the FNLC to the East Germans, a decision taken at the ninth congress of the East German Communist Party in May 1976. It was agreed there to provide military support for the FNLC and to create 45 pockets of "permanent revolution" inside Zaire in order to work for Mobutu's downfall. The East German defense minister and another general were visiting Angolan defense establishments—including the FNLC camp at Chicapa—when this year's invasion began in mid-May. If these facts are known to an outsider like myself, they must be well known to the CIA. Yet all their evidence has been slanted to make it appear that the Cubans are the principal agents involved in the Shaba operation. This anti-Cuban information blitz might serve a particular congressional interest, but it is selective and, in all probability, inaccurate. The White House, members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and most of the American press seem to be excessively gullible.

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